

**BACKGROUND TO THE REQUEST FOR A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Report of the Head of Scrutiny

Author: Michelle Diprose, Democratic Services Officer (Tel: 01992 555566)

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To invite Members of the Committee to consider the decision reached by Cabinet on 13 November 2017 in respect of the Cuffley Camp Outdoor Centre.

2. Summary and Background

- 2.1 A report on proposals for the future of the Cuffley Camp Outdoor Centre was considered by the Children's Services Cabinet Panel on 2 November 2017 and by the Resources, Property and the Economy Cabinet Panel on 9 November 2017. Additionally, a petition, entitled 'Stop the closure of Cuffley Camp Outdoor Centre' and containing 8839 signatures, was presented to the Resources, Property & the Economy Cabinet Panel. [The reports to the Cabinet Panels can be viewed here [\(Report to Children's Services Cabinet Panel\)](#) and [Report to Resources, Property & The Economy Cabinet Panel](#). The petition can be viewed [here](#).
- 2.2 As a result of their deliberations, the Panels' recommended to Cabinet that Cabinet approve proposals regarding the future of Cuffley Camp.
- 2.3 On 13 November 2017 Cabinet considered a report setting out proposals for the withdrawal of the Council's lease at Cuffley Camp Outdoor Centre. At that meeting, Cabinet agreed that:-
- i. The County Council should withdraw from its lease at Cuffley Camp Outdoor Centre ('the Camp') and commit to further engage with the landlord in order to promote the site's continued use as an outdoor education centre serving young people;*
 - ii. the Director of Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources, Property and the Economy, be authorised to agree terms for the surrender of the County Council's lease of the premises used by the Camp; and*
 - iii. that the expenditure associated with the surrender of the lease for the premises be met from the Council's contingency budget.*

- 2.4 An extract from the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting on 13 November 2017 and the Part I Report and Addenda considered by Cabinet are attached as Appendices 1 and 2 to this report (they can also be viewed here ([Cabinet Report & Minute](#))). The papers considered by Cabinet in Part II business are appended to the accompanying Part II Report.
- 2.5 On 15 November 2017, in accordance with Standing Order SC8 of Annex 9 of the Council's Constitution, five Members of the Liberal Democrat Group submitted a Call In Notice to the Council's Chief Legal Officer. The Call In Notice, which related to the Cabinet decision referred to above, was accepted as valid by the Chief Legal Officer; the Notice cited the following reasons for the decision having been Called In:-
1. Failure to by Cabinet to adequately consider the year by year usage and financial deficits data to enable full and proper consideration of the impact.
 2. Failure by Cabinet to consider how the current running deficit — which was £31,467 in 2016-17 could be addressed in future years to ensure a break even position.
 3. Failure to provide to the Cabinet the full details of the availability on a month by month basis of alternative outdoor centres and their availability to meet the expected needs of Cutfley Camp users which in 2016/17 numbered 8203.
 4. Failure to provide any explanations as to why the lease and the covenanted investment amounts totalling just short of £300,000 had not been made to GHIL (Gascoyne Holdings Ltd) despite this being known to certain members and officers by early 2016.
 5. Failure to consider the effect on the 5 permanent staff members on the termination of the lease and the effect on their "required to reside" status meaning that premises occupied by them would have to be vacated on termination.
 6. Cabinet incorrectly placed an emphasis on the statement in paragraph 4.15 that wrongly stated a "noticeable decline in bookings" when the decline is just 11% (thus not noticeable) for the period 2011 to 2017 or that the percentage of individuals attending in the first six months had increased in 2016/17 compared to both 2014 to 2016 years and 2011 to 2012 years..
 7. That Cabinet did not give any due consideration to the statement "more likely to have a negative differential impact for children given that 97% of users from schools. 82% of users are from primary schools." And that Cabinet gave un-due weight to the financial issues and did not adequately consider the differential impact.
 8. Failure of Cabinet to consider an option to maintain the lease until the freeholders of the site had secured an alternative long-term outdoor use for young people.
- 2.6 An initial response to the reasons for the Call In cited in the Call In Notice is attached as Item 2B(ii) of the agenda.

2.7 In considering the matter before the Overview & Scrutiny Committee today Members ***must*** consider the issue as referred to the Committee and the evidence before them with an open mind taking into account all issues presented to them at this meeting.

3. Recommendations

3.1 In accordance with Standing Order SC 8 (6) of Annex 9 of the Constitution, the Committee shall consider the called-in decision and take one of the following decisions:

- (a) that the Committee has no objection to the called-in decision being implemented; or
- (b) that the called-in decision be referred back to the Executive for re-consideration, giving the OSC's reasons for requiring the Executive to re-consider the decision; or
- (c) if, and only if, the Committee considers that the called-in decision is one which has been taken in breach of the Council's Policy Framework or Budget framework, that the called-in decision be referred to a meeting of Full Council, with the Committee's reasons for referring the called-in decision to Full Council, for consideration before the called-in decision is implemented.

Background Information

[Report & Minutes to Children's Services](#) Cabinet Panel, 2 November 2017

[Report & Minutes to Resources, Property & The Economy](#) Cabinet Panel, 9 November 2017

[Report & Minutes to Cabinet](#) 13 November 2017